

Educational Degrees

The following information is provided to assist a search committee in understanding more about educational degrees most often held by vocational Christian ministers.

DEGREE TERMINOLOGY

The best known college level degrees are Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

All degree programs offered by Southern Baptist Seminaries are not listed here however, those that laymen usually see listed on biographical resumes of Baptist pastors and other staff ministers are as follows:

Degrees Related Primarily to Pastoral Ministry

Associate of Divinity (ADiv) or the Diploma in Theology (DipTh)

Requirement: two full years of full-time study and is for the student who is thirty years of age or older without a college degree.

Bachelor of Divinity (BD) or Master of Divinity (MDiv)

Requirement: A college degree plus three years of seminary training. These degrees are equal and the BD can now be exchanged for the MDiv upon request.

Master of Theology (ThM) or Master of Systematic Theology (STM)

Requirement: A college degree, an MDiv and one year of graduate work.

Doctor of Ministry (DMin)

Requirement: A college degree, an MDiv and two years minimum of graduate work emphasizing practical aspects of pastoral ministry plus a written project.

Degrees Related Primarily to Academic Theology

Master of Theology (ThM)

Requirement: A college degree, an MDiv, and one year of graduate work.

Doctor of Theology (ThD), Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Requirement: A college degree, an MDiv, and a minimum of two years of graduate work.

Degrees in Church Music

Master of Church Music (MCM) or Master of Music (MM) and Master of Sacred Music (MSM)

Requirement: A college degree and a minimum of two years of seminary music training.

Doctor of Sacred Music (SMD), Doctor of Church Music (DCM), Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)

Requirement: A college degree, an MSM or MCM and a minimum of two years of graduate work.

Degrees Related Primarily to Religious Education

Master of Arts in Religious Education (MA in RE) or Master of Religious Education (MRE)

Requirement: A college degree and two years of seminary work.

Doctor of Education (EdD)

Requirement: A college degree an MA, MRE, or MDiv and two years minimum of graduate work.

Seminaries may have differences in terminology in degrees and some seminaries have dropped the ThM and ThD degrees from their curriculum. All six Southern Baptist seminaries are fully accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. The validity of the degree is unquestionable.

Honorary Degrees

Most Honorary Degrees are conferred to recognize outstanding service, rather than academic achievement. The most familiar of these is the Doctor of Divinity (DD). The worth of the degree varies according to the integrity and excellence of the institution conferring the degree. It is possible for these to be purchased or obtained through “degree mills” or by “influence peddling.”

CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS

Many pastors and staff members respond to God’s call at a time in life when age, family responsibility, financial considerations and other factors make it unreasonably difficult to secure a basic college degree prerequisite to seminary study. These individuals may enroll in seminary courses designed especially for them. Often, they bring to their ministry a background in business, industry or military life, which may help compensate for the lack of a college degree.

The Seminary Extension Department of the Southern Baptist Convention offers three levels of theological education. The Basic Curriculum Series is for pastors who prefer easy-to-read courses below the college level. The College Level Curriculum Series is for ministers and lay persons interested in study on a higher academic level. The Continuing Education Series is for seminary graduates.

Several associations in Oklahoma now have the Ministry Training Institute, which is a cooperative effort with Oklahoma Baptist University and the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma to provide college level courses taught in the association through the School of Christian Service at OBU. Four certificate and diploma programs are available.